United Nations S/PV.7512

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7512th meeting
Wednesday, 26 August 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	France	Mr. Stehelin
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mrs. Jakubonė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ms. Chan Shum

Agenda

The situation in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (S/2015/624)

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15-26501 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (S/2015/624)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Libya to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Bernardino León, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to welcome Mr. León, who is joining us today via video teleconference from Paris.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/624, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

I now give the floor to Mr. León.

Mr. León: The members of the Security Council have before them the latest report (S/2015/624) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, which details the work of the Mission over the past five months. The report paints a mixed picture of evolving security dynamics in Libya. A year since the country's most serious outbreak of armed hostilities and the disruption to the political process, local communities in western Libya are increasingly taking the lead in ceasefire and reconciliation initiatives between different towns and cities, thus contributing to a marked reduction in military tensions across that part of the country and the wider Tripoli area. That is in stark contrast to security dynamics elsewhere in the country.

Fifteen months since the start of military operations in Benghazi, in the east, it is clear that the confrontations between the parties have gradually transformed into a war of trenches, with no imminent end foreseen. In the interim, the status quo is exacting a heavy toll on the civilian population and on whatever remains of the city's much-damaged infrastructure. More than 100,000 of Benghazi's population remain internally displaced, and 70 per cent of the city's health facilities are either inaccessible or not functioning.

The situation in the south is equally appalling. The absence of the State and of a proper functioning security apparatus has exacerbated local competition among tribal groups for power and resources — a conflict that has its roots in decades-long marginalization and neglect by central authorities.

At the national level, the scale of human suffering is staggering for a country with large oil reserves and strong economic potential. According to different United Nations agencies, an estimated 1.9 million people require urgent humanitarian assistance to meet their basic health-care needs. Access to food is now a major problem for some 1.2 million people, mostly in Benghazi and the east. The number of internally displaced persons across Libya now stands at approximately 435,000. The health-care system is on the verge of collapse, with many hospitals across the country overcrowded and operating at severely reduced capacity, and many reporting acute shortages of medicines, vaccines and medical equipment. Power cuts are endemic in many areas of the country. Some neighbourhoods, such as in Benghazi, are enduring electricity cuts almost around the clock.

Close to 250,000 migrants are estimated to be in the country or transiting through it, many of them facing significant protection issues, including arbitrary arrest and detention in abusive conditions, sexual abuse, forced labour, exploitation and extortion. This year alone, more than 2,000 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, the vast majority in a desperate bid to make the sea crossing from Libya to Europe's southern shores.

At the same time, the country's economy continues to contract rapidly, the result of a significant reduction in oil revenues due to falling oil prices and low oil production from Libya's oilfields. Libya's financial reserves are also being heavily depleted, in large part as the result of unsustainable expenditures on non-productive items. The political-institutional crisis in the country has also manifested itself in growing

competition over key financial and other sovereign institutions.

Against that grim backdrop of growing hardship and misery stemming from deteriorating security and general lawlessness, widespread violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law continue with impunity across the country. Armed groups from all sides continue to abduct civilians on account of their political opinions or identity, often in the hope of exchanging them in return for a ransom or for the release of fighters or other civilians taken by rival groups. Not even humanitarian aid workers have been spared.

Permit me to use this platform to reiterate my call on all sides in the conflict to undertake the necessary steps to protect civilians from direct and indiscriminate attacks, facilitate their evacuation and allow unimpeded and safe access to humanitarian aid. I also wish to remind all parties of their obligations to end all forms of arbitrary detention and to protect all those detained from torture or other ill-treatment. While we welcome the release of some of the illegally detained persons, we continue to urge all parties to do more to complete that process as soon as possible.

When I last briefed the Council, in mid-July (see S/PV.7485), I spoke of the fact that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or Daesh, had asserted control of the strategically located city of Sirte, in central Libya. That control has now been extended to a stretch of coastline covering more than 200 kilometres east and west of Sirte. Despite an attempt on 11 August by local armed groups to dislodge Daesh from Sirte, its fighters regained control of the city three days later. The casualty figures are difficult to confirm, but witnesses report that Daesh has carried out brutal revenge attacks on its opponents. There can be no doubt that the danger that Daesh poses to Libya and the Libyan people is real, imminent and palpable. Libyan security and military actors, as well as political stakeholders on both sides of the divide, are fully cognizant of the danger posed by Daesh-affiliated militants. However, they must recognize that no strategy aimed at containing, if not eliminating, the Daesh threat can be viable unless it is part of a concerted, unified and coordinated effort that brings all Libyans together under a single banner whose allegiance is to the Libyan State and to a Government that is inclusive and representative of all Libyans. The message to Libya's leaders is clear. There is simply no alternative to unified and collective action if Libyans are to succeed in preventing a repeat of the catastrophic advances that Daesh has made in countries such as Syria and Iraq.

After my last briefing, in which I updated the Council on progress being made in the Libyan political dialogue process, I reconvened the main dialogue track for a new round of talks held in Geneva on 11 and 12 August. The two-day talks focused primarily on ways of expediting the dialogue process ahead of the critical deadline of 21 October, the date on which the mandate of the House of Representatives could end, according to the constitutional declaration. Although the General National Congress in Tripoli, unlike other dialogue participants, did not initial the main text of the Libyan Political Agreement on 11 July, I am confident that their concerns can be addressed in the ongoing discussions on the annexes to the Agreement, including those pertaining to the formation of a Government of national accord.

Seven months after the United Nations Support Mission in Libya launched the Libyan political dialogue process, I am increasingly confident that the process is finally reaching its final stages. It has been a difficult and challenging process, but one that has proved increasingly resilient, despite repeated attempts by spoilers from all sides whose narrow interests and agendas militate against a peaceful solution to the conflict in Libya. The fact that a majority of stakeholders have sought to engage in the different tracks is a reassuring sign of the grassroots support that the dialogue process has gradually acquired from various segments of the Libyan population. The talks have made a lot of progress in narrowing the deficit of trust that exists among Libya's political stakeholders and in forging agreement on a road map that lays out a vision for bringing a rapid end to the political crisis and military conflict that have ravaged Libya for more than a year. Overcoming the country's political polarization and divisiveness will be no easy task. We should not underestimate the magnitude of the challenges or the resources that will be needed to pull Libya back from the brink of economic meltdown and a total collapse of State institutions. Most important will be the determination and commitment of Libyans themselves, and specifically of their political leaders, if Libya is to safeguard its national unity and territorial integrity and spare its people the scourge of long-term civil strife and instability.

I would like to urge the leaderships of both the House of Representatives and the General National Congress not to squander the historic and unique opportunity before them to be peacemakers. I appeal to them not to waste the hard work they have invested over the past seven months in order to arrive at the point where they are today. The agreement they have negotiated may not be perfect, but it is a fair and reasonable one, in which the only winners are the Libyan people. I would also like to reiterate that the United Nations, along with the international community, will remain steadfast in its commitment and support to Libya's democratic process. Any attempt to derail the political process by undemocratic means should not be tolerated. The dialogue process remains the only credible and legitimate mechanism by which Libyans can safeguard the continuity of the democratic process in their country. Time is running out. The onus is on Libya's leaders on all sides and at all levels to make that final push towards peace.

As Libya's dialogue process enters its final phase, I wish to thank the members of the Council for their support for my mediation efforts and to reiterate my sincere and profound gratitude and appreciation to the Libyan people and their representatives, as well as to the various Member States and regional organizations that have supported the dialogue process. In particular, I would like to thank Algeria, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Morocco, Qatar, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States. The collective effort and determination of the international community will be vital to articulating a clear strategy for the delivery of technical assistance. It is equally important that the international community move quickly to present a clearly articulated strategy in support of the Libyan State and the efforts by a Government of national accord to contain and eliminate the threat that groups such as Daesh pose not only to the stability of Libya but also to regional and international security.

The President: I thank Mr. León for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank Mr. Bernardino León, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/624) and for the additional information he has given us.

It is clear that Libya is now experiencing the most critical phase to date of its modern history. Libya's very existence as a united, independent and sovereign State is threatened due to the greed and whims of its children and the conspiracy that certain countries promote for their own purposes. It is also due to terrorism, which does not even believe in the existence of Libya except as a State that finances a multinational entity — one where the faithful are beheaded or crucified, the law of the jungle rules and the devil is the leader. Undeniably, the Secretary-General's report before the Council highlights some of the dimensions of that very gloomy picture. Despite all that, we still hope that Libya will be saved by its own people.

The Libyan people have recently begun to feel that the country's crisis can be settled. However, such optimism is linked to the formation of a Government of national accord and reconciliation. Such a Government must count on a minimum of knowledge, including about the management of State affairs. It must be familiar with the rules of good governance and be able to communicate effectively with all parties. At the same time, experts harbour doubts as to the success of forming such a Government because of the absence of criteria to be met for the selection of its members — a view quite different from public opinion. That is why the roles of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and of the Security Council are vitally important at this stage, as they must guide the participants in the political dialogue so that they can work to set aside the failures of the past four years. The ultimate goal should be to choose new leadership for the country that is free from partisan and personal interests. The progress achieved in the political dialogue thus far has been an undeniable success, which could provide the foundation for peace and security during the remaining transitional period before adoption of the constitution.

However, that success could vanish owing to the intransigence of a particular party that is obstructing the process, a party we are all familiar with that does not respect the future of Libya or the lives of Libyans as long as it has enough weapons and foreign support to block consensus. That is why Libyans await a firm position from Mr. Bernardino León and from the Security Council so that they can put an end to the procrastination and futile, deliberate delays that are or could be adopted by a party to the dialogue. Libyans

want to work towards a Government of national accord and to create the necessary conditions so that it can begin its work from the capital, Tripoli, as soon as possible.

However, the formation of such a Government is not the end of the process, because it would perhaps be a Government that is not better than previous Governments. But the direct engagement of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to provide support in establishing State institutions and offer advice on good governance could change that. Such support could serve to improve the performance of the Government and allow it to diffuse the current crisis in Libya. The Security Council must also be ready to take all the necessary measures to help the Government to extend its control over all of Libya's territory and to fight extremist groups that resist disarmament when the time comes.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that all efforts made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General could be futile if we do not clearly define the map of terrorism in Libya and if we do not identify the sponsors of terrorism as terrorists who provide weapons. I say that because paragraph 81 of the Secretary-General's report shows that the situation on the ground is critical. There is currently a ceasefire in Benghazi, now that the city hosts the largest terrorist force in Libya, which is resisting army operations to free the city from terrorism and to guarantee the return of its citizens.

A few days ago, some described Derna as being a place free from terrorism, a free city. The city is in fact occupied by Al-Qaida, which has been the case since the adoption of resolution 1970 (2011). I visited Derna in January 2012, during which I noticed that public State institutions were not flying the Libyan national flag. I believe that is still the case, as Al-Qaida has not changed its tactics to date. For the past six months, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or Daesh, has controlled Derna with the support of Al-Qaida. There remain differences when it comes to the respective interests of the two groups, but Al-Qaida has taken over Derna. We all know that the sole difference between Al-Qaida and ISIL is the nature of their respective criminal activities. Members of the Council should know, if they do not already, that the scope of the danger posed by Al-Qaida in Libya goes beyond the danger posed by ISIL: whereas ISIL terrorists are present in specific, limited areas of the country, members of Al-Qaida are found in many parts of Libya and call themselves rebels and revolutionaries. Unfortunately, that terrorist group has manipulated a great number of young people who have joined them in their fight without really knowing the reality of the group. I am convinced that Al-Qaida is going to return to the forefront and put up ferocious resistance once it believes it is to be disarmed.

I hope that all States will have a very clear position when choosing between support for the Libyan people or support for terrorists, regardless of their names.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.